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Forest Service

Alaska Region
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Alaska . . . The Great Land





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The Great Land

1989

USDA Forest Service
Alaska Region



ALASKA!!! Alaska is derived from the Eskimo word for 'Great Land' . . . and by any standard, it is great. Encompassing over 365,000,000 acres, (148,000,000 hectares) Alaska is easily the largest of America's 50 states.

ALASKA, the state

Alaska is a diverse land, rich in minerals, fisheries, wildlife, timber, and other natural resources. The coastal areas of Southeast and Southcentral Alaska have a marine climate, with mild winters, cool summers and ample rain. Mountains, glaciers, and vast forests of Sitka spruce and hemlock, dominate these coastal areas.

The interior part of the state has thousands of lakes, forests of birch, alder and spruce, and massive mountain ranges. The winters are long and cold, the summers warm and short.



Population

Alaska has a small population compared to that of the other 49 states, but has had great growth over the past 8 years. The population of the state was about 400,000 in 1980; seven years later it was up to over 537,000; an increase of 34%. Nearly half of the state's population is under 24 years of age.



National Forests

The Forest Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been an integral part of Alaska since the establishment in 1907 of Alaska's two National Forests, the Chugach and Tongass National Forests. The 17 million acre (6.9 million hectares) Tongass is the nation's largest National Forest followed by the 6 million acre (2.4 million hectares) Chugach.

Timber

Diversity of climate within Alaska produces two distinct types of forests: the cool, moist rainforests of Southeast Alaska, and the drier forests of the interior part of the state. Alaska's various woods offer distinct and valuable characteristics such as strength, beauty, flexibility, durability, aroma, and grain.

Alaska's wood products now average about 2.5 million cubic meters per year, most of which come from the coastal forests of Southeast Alaska. The potential producing capacity of the state is well over 16 million cubic meters of wood annually, on a continual basis.

This reliable timber resource contains a variety of wood species which help meet the increasing needs of the Pacific Rim countries and enable opportunities for long-term trading partnerships with Alaska.

The rainforests of Southeast Alaska yield large evergreen trees, which produce woods that are excellent for manufactured goods, pulp products and construction. Four tree species are of commercial value: Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Alaska cedar and western red cedar.

The interior forests are not nearly as developed as those of Southeast Alaska, although they are potentially a major source of future timber. The forests of interior are mostly hardwoods which are excellent for furniture and other consumer products.



Transportation

Transportation of Alaska's wood and other commodities is an important consideration. In the coastal forests of Southeast, water transportation is already highly developed. Relatively warm ocean currents ensure ice-free access to ports throughout the year.



While transportation methods along the coastal waterways of Alaska are well established, transporting timber within the interior is more difficult. Much of this portion of the state is unpopulated and totally without roads. Efforts are presently under way to increase accessibility to forests in these areas. Interior forests have potential access to the Alaska Railroad from Fairbanks to deep-water, ice-free ports south of Anchorage. Large sections of the interior have the additional potential of access on two large rivers, the Yukon and Kuskokwim.

Wildlife Resources

Alaska is justifiably known for its wildlife and fish. Game species such as moose, mountain goat, deer, and bear abound throughout the state. Over 300 species of birds depend upon the abundant fertile habitat of the state, including bald eagles. Alaska has the largest concentration of bald eagles in the world. In some parts of Southeast Alaska, black and brown “grizzly” bears outnumber local human residents. The famed Copper River Delta, east of Anchorage, contains thousands of hectares of marshland. The Delta serves as a nesting, and feeding area for millions of birds each year.



Fisheries

Since 1980, over 74 major fish habitat enhancement projects have been completed within the Tongass National Forest, at a cost of over 14 million dollars. These projects are capable of adding 7 million pounds of new salmon to the fisheries annually. Alaska's contribution of fisheries resources is significant.

Preliminary data from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game shows that 1988 was a profitable year for Alaska's fishermen. The domestic ground fish catch totalled 1.6 billion pounds, up nearly 75 percent from the preceding year. Last year was good for the world-famous Bristol Bay Sac Roe Herring Factory, also. Fishermen netted 10,371 short tons, with a market value of nearly \$14.5 million dollars.



Commercial salmon fishermen harvested about 99.4 million fish in 1988, for a value of 741.5 million dollars. Pacific Rim joint ventures were off about 8 percent in '88 as compared to the previous year, with 2.8 billion pounds caught. Market value was a bit higher than before, though, and brought in about \$410 million dollars.

On the Chugach, fisheries projects on the internationally known Copper River Delta, hold excellent prospects for additional salmon catches in Southcentral Alaska. Over a five-year period from 1981 to 1986, about 80 percent of total United States commercial salmon harvest was landed in Alaska.

Expected legislation from the United States Congress concerning fishing of Alaska's salmon on the high seas will ensure a strong fisheries resource for years to come.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the State, with an annual growth of between 5 and 7 percent. The Forest Service works with tourism operators and the visitor industry to develop cooperative programs and identify areas for partnerships. A recent visitor survey found that three areas of the National Forest are the most visited attractions in Alaska. The Portage Valley and Begich, Boggs Visitor Center on the Chugach National Forest are Alaska's most visited attraction, with Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage through the Tongass National Forest second, and the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center near Juneau, third. The Forest Service will continue to be a leader in promoting recreation opportunities on National Forests in Alaska.

Minerals

GOLD!!! Beginning in the late 19th century, the work stirred the imagination of more than one person . . . and Alaska was their destination. Since then there have been many boom and busts based upon minerals. Gold gave way to copper, which gave way to oil. Oil is still very important, but other minerals such as molybdenum, lead, silver, and once again gold, suggest a promising minerals future for the state. Hard rock mining, the industry that was the driving force of the State in the early part of the century, is once again promising to be an important industry. Major mines near Juneau and Ketchikan, when brought on-line, will provide long-term employment for Alaskans.

Natural Resources

Because Alaska has not yet developed large scale industries, most of the natural resources are exported after receiving some primary manufacture in the state. Alaska's strategic global location plays a large role in the ever expanding Pacific Rim markets. Exportation of wood products, minerals, fish, and especially oil, could help reduce the United State's trade balance deficit.



The International Trade Administration of the United States Department of Commerce has local offices throughout the Pacific Rim, helping buyers coordinate with government agencies in Alaska. They can provide a list of the most economical and reputable exporters of Alaska's products.

Assistance can also be obtained from the Foreign Agriculture Service in Seoul, Korea. Foreign investments, through licensed dealers in land, standing timber or processing and transportation facilities in Alaska, are welcomed.

Alaska looks forward to developing and maintaining a close working relationship with our Korean partners in meeting the needs of both our countries, today and in the future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'A' followed by a horizontal stroke.



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